

## Pink by dustyirish

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**Summary:**

A pile of second-hand baby clothes stirs up all manner of things.

## Pink

### Author's Note:

Written for Stonathan Week : Fluff Prompt. And my god, did I fulfill it. This is not the original thing I was going to post for this prompt, but after I depressed the ever-loving hell out of everyone yesterday, I felt I had no choice but to write something happy for Steve, Jonathan and Joyce. They deserved it after what I put them through. I admit, I may have gone a bit overboard here, but you can't say it's depressing!

*Pink, it was love at first sight  
yeah, pink when I turn out the light  
and pink gets me high as a kite  
And I think everything is going to be alright  
no matter what we do tonight.*

~ Aerosmith

Joyce opened the front door and came inside to the sound of Jonathan's soft laughter. She just paused there a moment, smiling. It was such a good sound, such a *missed* sound, and it was all due to Steve Harrington's car parked in the yard. They had been together six months at that point. Joyce knew all of the problems it was bound to

cause for the future, the whispered talk that was already circulating through Hawkins. And she couldn't care less. Jonathan laughing trumped everything.

She walked down the hallway to his bedroom, peering in at the two teens from the open doorway.

Steve was sprawled on the bed with his head in Jonathan's lap, holding a fluffy yellow baby dress in the air and grinning. Jonathan had one hand tangled in Steve's hair - the other was clutching a tiny sailor-themed onesie.

Joyce blinked. "Okay, so I know I almost flunked biology, but ..."

They both looked over and smiled. Then, as her words registered, Jonathan turned beet red, dropped the outfit and sputtered "God, *Mom!*" Steve just snickered.

She came in and sat on the bed, nudging Steve over with an elbow. She sensed that something was different and then realized that this was the first time Jonathan hadn't freaked out and jumped away from Steve at her approach. His head stayed pillowed in Jonathan's lap. Jonathan had removed his hand from Steve's mess of hair, but it hadn't strayed far, just to his shoulder.

Joyce wanted to laugh in delight, but contained herself, glancing around the room instead. She noted an additional pile of baby clothes spread out on the mattress behind them. "Care to clue me in here?"

Jonathan sighed. "They're having a clothing drive at school. For charity. Somehow we got stuck with *this*," he grumbled, gesturing at the pile.

Steve didn't seem nearly as displeased. He'd plucked out a soft pink sleeper and was gazing at it thoughtfully. "Look at this one, babe," he murmured, almost under his breath, to Jonathan. "Look at the little butterflies." Jonathan gave it an obligatory glance and went right back to what he was doing, but Steve held on.

He liked to pass himself off as brash and cocky, the life of the party. But for a few seconds, his thumb brushing over the tiny foot of the

pajamas, that Steve disappeared completely. His eyes were soft, a small smile playing over his lips. In that moment, Joyce knew exactly how her son had fallen in love.

Jonathan picked up a cardboard box from the floor and started folding clothes into it. Steve snatched it away. "What are you doing? They need to be washed first." Jonathan shot him a disbelieving look.

Joyce nodded. "Steve's right." She saw his smug expression and added "For once."

Jonathan sighed again.

"Hey," she said, "Don't you have to work tonight, honey?"

He looked at her, startled. "What time is it?"

"Almost four."

Jonathan quickly untangled himself from Steve, asking "Can you wash them?" on his way out the door to the bathroom.

"Yeah ... wait. No. I've got the damn family dinner thing!" he called after Jonathan, then put his hands over his face and groaned.

"You don't sound too happy about it," Joyce offered.

"That's because I'm not. It's nothing but dead, glaring silence at the restaurant and then World War Three breaks out the minute we hit the car. And the battle rages all night." He sighed, the sound muffled by his fingers. "I'll live. I've always got my Walkman."

"And you've got us," Joyce added firmly, tugging his hands away from his face and nodding. He gave her a grateful smile. She returned it and stood. "And *I'll* take care of the clothes." Steve looked like he might be about to inform her which detergent to use. She cut him off at the pass, amusement tingeing her voice. "I've washed one or two baby things in my day."

She went to grab a laundry basket from her room and when she returned Steve was still sprawled on the bed, the sleeper laid out on his chest. Joyce reached for it. "Can't forget this." She paused. "Unless

... did you want to keep it, sweetie?"

It was Steve's turn to blush. He sat up and tossed the outfit into the basket like it had burned him. "Yeah, I don't think our cat would appreciate the new look."

He laughed, but he also didn't meet Joyce's eyes.

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Joyce heard the front door open and Hopper come in.

"Hey, sexy lady," he called as he made his usual beeline for the kitchen to lay his hat on the table and root through the fridge.

Joyce kept waiting for the warmth she felt upon hearing his voice to fade. She was beginning to think that, just maybe, it never would. "Hey yourself."

She heard him walk back in towards the couch, then the sudden squeak in the floorboard as he stopped in his tracks, and "...Joyce?" It was a strangled croak.

She looked quickly over and saw him goggling at the pile of freshly-washed baby clothes on her lap. "What?" She stared, puzzled, for a moment before it hit her. "Oh, *no!* No, Hop! Not me." She let out a laugh. "Jonathan and Steve."

Hopper quirked an eyebrow. "Yeah, not really lessening my questions any." At least he sounded like he was breathing again.

She grinned. "A clothes drive, for school."

Hopper plopped down beside her. The smile fell from Joyce's face and her heart clenched as she realized the baby things might stir up sad memories. She sneaked glances his way, trying to gauge his reaction. Thankfully, he didn't seem bothered, just settled in like always, with a beer between his legs and an arm around her shoulder.

"If this is their job, how'd you get stuck with it?"

"Work and an unfortunate dinner obligation."

Joyce expected Hopper to ask about their own dinner plans. Instead, he asked something else entirely, softly and with concern in his eyes. "Those kids are really in love, aren't they?"

She nodded. "That's putting it mildly."

"*Christ*." He sighed and kissed her forehead. "It's gonna be a shitstorm for them, Joyce."

She touched his hand. "Love always *is* a shitstorm, Hopper."

"Ain't that the truth. By the way, who the hell does Harrington think he's fooling? With the whole parking three blocks away and sneaking in the window every night routine?"

"I don't know," she laughed. "I'll spring it on them one of these days, just to watch their expressions."

"I used to think he'd make a decent cop. But, Jesus; the kid needs more imagination than that to make it in the Department."

Joyce snorted. "You're right, Hop. The Hawkins PD is positively *overflowing* with imagination."

Hopper worked on his beer for a few minutes, then plucked something out of the pile of clothes, turning it over and over in his hands. Joyce saw, with absolutely no surprise, that it was the same sleeper that Steve had been so smitten with.

"Adorable, isn't it?"

Hopper gave a noncommittal grunt, but instead of returning it to the pile he put it in his lap, peering down at it. "Cute little butterflies," he muttered, almost begrudgingly.

Joyce bit back a grin. "So, how was your day?"

He groaned. "Frank Milton lost another goddamn garden gnome. Fifth one this month."

"Not to question your imagination or anything, Hopper, but have you ever thought of setting up a stakeout?"

He stared at her. "A what now?"

"A stakeout. A *gnome* stakeout. You already know where the perp strikes, right? So just go get a gnome, a really irresistible fellow, maybe with a little wheelbarrow or something, and park across the street in an unmarked car and *wait*."

There was a long pause, then "Why the fuck didn't I think of that?" He barked out a self-deprecating laugh and sat back, closing his eyes. But Joyce didn't miss the way his finger kept sneaking out to brush gently over pink fluff.

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Joyce folded the last tiny jumper and closed the cardboard box just as Jonathan came in the door from work. Hopper was fast asleep beside her, head tilted back on the couch, beer bottle empty, mouth open.

She smiled at Jonathan and nodded towards the box on her lap.

"Thanks, Mom," he said softly, taking off his coat. He raised a questioning eyebrow in Hopper's direction as a loud snore reverberated through the room.

"Garden gnomes," she mouthed.

Jonathan rolled his eyes and walked over, bending to take the box from her.

She stopped him, putting her arms around his neck and tugging him down into a hug instead.

"Not that I'm complaining, but what was that for?" he whispered as he straightened back up.

"Nothing, baby." She touched his cheek and smiled again. "Nothing."

Instead of taking the box out to the car, Jonathan lingered in front of her, just holding it and looking a little lost. Joyce stood quietly and

tugged him into the kitchen so they could talk.

She was smart enough to know exactly what was on Jonathan's mind. She was also smart enough to know that he wouldn't say a thing about it until he was damned good and ready. She lit a cigarette and sat at the table. "Did you eat?"

He nodded. "Did you guys get something?"

"Hop conked out from his exhausting day of policing," she snorted. "I'll throw a sandwich together later."

"Do you want me to make you something? I think we have some hamburger."

"No, honey, I'm fine."

Jonathan set off pacing around the kitchen, hand reaching out to thoughtfully brush over cardboard, opening the refrigerator then immediately closing it without removing anything, more pacing, more cardboard rubbing, stopping at the sink for no reason Joyce could ascertain, then finally back over to stand beside her chair. "Didn't you think that was weird today? With Steve? And the ..." He broke off, nodding down to the box.

"I don't know," she said casually, taking another drag of her cigarette. "Did you think it was weird?"

"Yeah," he laughed, "It was *really* weird."

"But was it bad weird? Or good weird? Or just weird weird?"

"It was *weird*, Mom. But ..."

"But?"

Jonathan nodded. "Yeah. You know? *But*."

She nodded back. "Right. But. Got it."

She smiled and shook her head as he retreated outside with the box.



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Two A.M. and Joyce couldn't sleep. She shifted positions for the fiftieth time that night, then bit her lip in thought and finally slipped out of bed, slowly so as not to jostle Hopper.

She walked softly down the hall and listened carefully at Jonathan's door for any signs of movement. Hearing none she peeked in, finding exactly what she expected to find : two tangled up boys, Steve's head snuggled against Jonathan's chest, Jonathan's arm wrapped around Steve's back. She tiptoed in, forcing herself not to stop and cover the two pairs of feet that were sticking out from under the blanket. She bent to the floor and snatched Jonathan's keys from his jeans pocket, holding them so they wouldn't jangle, and hurried back out - but not so fast that she didn't notice the way Jonathan's hand was once again plunged deeply into Steve's hair.

Joyce sprinted out to the car in her sleepshirt, bare feet crunching on the frost-covered grass, popped the trunk, liberated her prize and ran back for the warmth of the house.

She tossed Jonathan's keys onto the kitchen table and went back down the hall, back to her bedroom and Hopper's snores. She opened the bottom dresser drawer, careful to avoid the squeak, and shoved her old, ratty corduroys out of the way to make room for pink butterflies.